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Bible Symbols

Hills and Mountains

MANKIND HAS ALWAYS had a fascination for hills and mountains. Wherever a mountain exists, there is always a challenge to view it, to climb it or to live near it or on it. From where the writer is preparing this article, he looks out through his window across a valley to One Tree Hill, a 2,000-ft (600m) high peak in the Dandenong mountain range near Melbourne. (See Page 2) Houses have been built upon its steep slopes as far as the authorities will allow. A road has been built up to the summit where there is a restaurant, complete with a viewing platform and the inevitable mounted pay-telescope. This same kind of setting is to be found all around the world wherever civilisation encroaches upon hills and mountains.

MOUNTAINS USED FOR RELIGIOUS PURPOSES

Mountains have always been an attraction to pagan worshippers. Often they have erected altars and images of their gods and goddesses at the tops of mountains and tall hills, where they conduct their ceremonies and rituals. This was very true in Old Testament times and the groves and high places of pagan Canaan were to become a sore temptation to the Children of Israel. Before entering the Promised Land they were told that the places of pagan idolatry were to be completely destroyed:

‘You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree.’

[Deuteronomy 12.2 NKJV]

Sadly, whilst Israel entered the Promised Land with enthusiasm, they did not destroy all the pagan worshippers, nor their places of worship. As a result they eventually succumbed to this abominable form of worship themselves, bringing the wrath of God upon their heads:

‘...I will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their deeds....They offer sacrifices on the mountaintops, and burn incense on the hills, under oaks, poplars, and terebinths, because their shade is good.’ [Hosea 4.9-13 NKJV]



One Tree Hill, Dandenong mountain range near Melbourne

Mountains have also provided the setting for many significant events found throughout the Bible. Noah's ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. Abraham was called upon by God to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mount Moriah. The Ten Commandments were given to Moses upon Mount Sinai. Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal before Israel on Mount Carmel. The Lord Jesus Christ preached his most profound recorded sermon on a mountain and his famous prophecy of the end times on the Mount of Olives. He was transfigured before Peter, James and John upon a high mountain and finally ascended to

heaven from the Mount of Olives. Paul gave his address about 'the unknown God' on Mars Hill in Athens. Time and again mountains have been significant in the history of the Jews. Even today hills and mountains are desirable sites for the building of churches around the world. In the Holy Land many sites of Biblical significance now have shrines, grottos and churches built upon them.

MOUNTAINS AS SYMBOLS

To those who are not familiar with symbols used in the Bible, there are puzzling prophecies found in the book of Isaiah:

'Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.' [Isaiah 2.2 NKJV]

'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low..."' [Isaiah 40.3,4 NKJV]

The purpose of this article is to explain the meaning of the symbols used in these and other similar verses found in the Bible.

The prophet Habakkuk was chosen by God to warn Judah to return to Him, because He was about to use the Chaldean invasion to humble His people. Of special interest to us is that the prophet also looked forward to the sweeping changes that will take place upon the earth at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. In particular we see how the prophet understood that 'mountains' and 'hills' are symbols for 'nations' and their leaders:

'He stood and measured the earth; He looked and startled the nations. And the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills bowed. His ways are everlasting.'

[Habakkuk 3.6 NKJV]

Mountains and hills are dominant features in a landscape and give the appearance of being 'everlasting' and 'enduring'. They are therefore appropriate symbols to use for nations, which also appear to those involved as being 'everlasting' and 'enduring' nations. However this prophecy, along with a number of others, shows us that despite the apparent everlasting appearance of

these nations, the '*everlasting mountains*' are to be scattered at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the '*perpetual hills*' are going to bow down before the King of Kings. The Psalmist gives another explanation for the significance of mountains and hills:

'Give the king your judgments, O God, and your righteousness to the king's Son. He will judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. The mountains will bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He will bring justice to the poor of the people; he will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear you as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.'

[Psalm 72. 1-5 NKJV]

Here the king and the mountains, bring judgements and peace, while the king's son and the little hills bring righteousness. So '*mountains*' and '*hills*' can be interpreted as '**kings**' and their descendants.

'WHY DO THE NATIONS RAGE?'

In a Messianic Psalm of David we read of the proud and haughty response of the nations to the call of the Lord Jesus Christ at his return, for the nations to submit to his righteous government:

'Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us."' [Psalm 2.1-3 NKJV]

In the coming age the kingdom of God is to be dominant. There will be no room for the pride and arrogance of other rulers who refuse to acknowledge the King, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore these '*everlasting mountains*' have to be scattered to make way for the kingdom of God, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah:

'The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted

up and it shall be brought low...Upon all the high mountains,
and upon all the hills that are lifted up.' [Isaiah 2.11-14 NKJV]

THE STONE CUT OUT WITHOUT HANDS

Daniel chapter two is a key chapter in understanding Bible prophecy. It also enhances our understanding of mountains as Bible symbols. King Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream an awesome image of a giant warrior standing over him:

'You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendour was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.' [Daniel 2.31-33 NKJV]

The image was made of four different metals, which Daniel interpreted as being various empires and nations representing the kingdoms of men down through the ages. Nebuchadnezzar himself is described by Daniel as a '*king of kings*' (verse 37). Finally the dream revealed all the elements of the image standing up on its feet in the latter days ready for the nations represented by it to be destroyed at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ:

'Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing-floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.' [Daniel 2.35 NKJV]

The stone which '*was cut out without hands*' [Daniel 2.34] representing the Lord Jesus Christ, grew in size, becoming a mountain filling the whole earth. Daniel provides the interpretation that this '*great mountain*' is the kingdom of God, shortly to be established upon earth:

'And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.'

[Daniel 2.44 NKJV]

This is the only kingdom that can truly use the symbol 'everlasting' or 'perpetual' kingdom. It is to be built upon the ruins of the kingdoms of men, and it is the only kingdom that is to last 'for ever.' The destruction of these proud and lofty 'everlasting mountains', representing the kingdoms of men is also foretold in the Psalms:

'Yet I have set my King on my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to me, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."'

[Psalm 2.6-9 NKJV]

These verses confirm that the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, will



The climber traversing the rock face to make his way to the top

overcome the rebellious nations of the kingdoms of men. He will set up the everlasting Kingdom on God's holy hill of Zion.

THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOUSE

In the verse noted earlier, the prophet Isaiah was inspired to paint one of many pictures revealing the nature of the future kingdom of God:

'Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us his ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.' [Isaiah 2.2,3 NKJV]

'In the latter days' is an expression frequently used to refer to the time when the hand of God will once again become obvious in the affairs of this world. It speaks of a time when mankind's domination in world history is to come to a close, and the Lord Jesus Christ is to be revealed as king over the whole earth.

Jesus was a Jew of the royal tribe of Judah, a descendant of King David, so it could be said that he was cut out from the nation (mountain) of Israel and separated for God's purpose. He will be The King of Kings, as foretold in the book of Revelation:

'Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on **His** robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.' [Revelation 19.15,16 NKJV]

It will be an age when Jerusalem shall be the centre of the earth and all nations shall come to it to learn the ways of God. It is widely believed that Mount Zion was formerly known as 'Mount Moriah', the mountain upon which God called upon Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. [Genesis chapter 22] We know that God was testing the faith of Abraham and at the last moment, the

angel forbade him to touch Isaac. It is significant that Abraham told Isaac that God would provide a lamb for a burnt offering and a ram was found caught by its horns in a thicket. More important, the fulfilment of this prophecy occurred when God's only son, the Lord Jesus Christ was provided as a sacrifice for the sin of the world. [John 1.29]

The mountain of the LORD's house refers to Mount Zion, one of several mountains upon which Jerusalem is built, and upon which the Jews built God's temple. The only part of that temple remaining today is that much-revered Jewish site, the excavated foundation of which was known as 'the wailing wall' and is now called the Western wall. This is also the place where a glorious temple will be built as '*a house of prayer for all nations.*' [Mark 11.17]

CONCLUSION

'Mountains' are used in the Bible as symbols to represent kingdoms, kings and nations. The message that goes along with the use of this symbol brings us an urgent warning that the kingdoms of men are about to be brought to an end in a devastating way, at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth. However, the message that is also associated with this symbol is that of a wonderful New World for those who patiently and faithfully wait for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is shortly to return from heaven to set up that kingdom which is the earnest hope of all those who truly love him. We urge you to look into these matters and to take the action necessary so that you may be prepared for the coming King.

Jim Reid
Melbourne, Australia

Sayings of Jesus

‘I am the resurrection and the life’

IN JOHN’S GOSPEL record we read about one of the most moving incidents in our Lord’s ministry. John chapter 11 opens with the words: *‘Now a man named Lazarus was sick.’* Martha and Mary the two sisters of Lazarus, sent word to Jesus, *‘Lord, the one you love is sick.’* [John 11.3 NIV] Jesus’ reply to this message was: *‘This sickness will not end in death.’* [John 11.4 NIV]

On hearing this news, Jesus stayed where he was for two more days. Martha and Mary wished Jesus would come immediately to heal their brother but Jesus did not always respond immediately in the way that men and women wanted or expected. He always acted in complete obedience to his heavenly Father as he said on another occasion: *‘...I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.’* [John 5.30 NIV]

After two days Jesus said: *‘Let us go back to Judaea.’* [John 11.7 NIV] John tells us that on his arrival, Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Allowing for the messengers to reach Jesus, the lapse of two days and then the time taken for the return journey, Lazarus must have died shortly after the messengers left Bethany. Yet Jesus already knew that Lazarus was dead because we read in this chapter: *‘When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”’* [John 11.4 NIV] Yet Lazarus was dead and buried – so what did Jesus mean? After he had said this he went on to tell them, *‘Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.’* [John 11.11 NIV] Then Jesus explained to his followers *‘Lazarus is dead.’* [John 11.14 NIV]

After this Jesus and his band of followers journeyed to Bethany. On arrival they found Martha, Mary and many people who had come to comfort

them. We can picture the sad scene. A loss of a loved one, the tears, the emptiness and Martha's words: *'Lord...if you had been here my brother would not have died.'* [John 11.21 NIV] Martha knew Jesus had the power to heal the sick immediately but Lazarus had been dead four days and his body would have already started to decay.

Jesus answered her with the words: *'Your brother will rise again.'* Martha replied with conviction *'I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.'* [John 11.23,24 NIV] Martha believed in the resurrection, at Christ's return to the earth. She was also convinced that Jesus could raise her brother immediately. Here was true faith. There was no place in her thoughts for the erroneous idea that his soul had left the body and gone to heaven at death. No, she knew that her brother would remain in the grave until the call of the resurrection at Christ's second coming. She believed the decaying body presented no difficulties for the power of the resurrection.

After Martha had expressed her belief in the resurrection of the dead, Jesus said to her:

'I am the resurrection and the life.' [John 11.25 NIV]

Here we must pause and consider the meaning of these few powerful words, which form the title of this article. Although they were spoken to Martha, they are recorded for our learning and comfort also.

Lazarus, who had believed, was now in the sleep of death, completely unconscious, waiting the time of resurrection. The one to bring about this mighty work was Jesus who was standing before Martha. Martha was looking on the one, the only one who could through the power of his heavenly Father, bring the resurrection and the life. Martha understood fully and believed the words of Jesus which are recorded in John's gospel: *'For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.'* [John 6.40 NIV]

Imagine the feelings Martha would have experienced at this time of great sadness in her life. Standing before her was the complete answer to all human problems. She understood Jesus was God's only begotten Son whose work was to preach the gospel of salvation. *'Yes, Lord,'* she told him, *'I believe that you*

are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.' [John 11.27 NIV]

One of the many joys of believing the Bible is to discover how it all perfectly fits together. Martha knew that men and women are mortal. Left to our own devices, death is the final end for all living beings. The words spoken to Martha - *'I am the resurrection and the life'* held out far more than just the resurrection. Jesus was **the life**. Martha's sister Mary also understood that Jesus was the resurrection and **the life**. Martha had to share this great news with Mary as we see from the following verses: *'And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.'* [John 11 28,29 NIV]

Yes, she believed in her heart that Jesus could raise her brother from the dead, just as he could have healed him. Mary as well as Martha did not believe in heaven going at death. No, they showed in their actions faith in God through his Son. Why? Because they had listened to the teachings of Jesus based upon the Old Testament prophecies. David wrote in the Psalms: *'because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.'* [Psalm 16.10 NIV] These prophetic words of David expressed his own hope in the resurrection and pointed forward to the resurrection of his greater son, Jesus Christ. By becoming associated with the work of Jesus in the way he has appointed, through belief and baptism, we too can have that great hope of the resurrection.

The Apostle Peter spoke of this same hope in his first letter:

'Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.' [1 Peter 1.13,21 NIV]

The prophet Daniel also spoke of the day of resurrection in these words:

'Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.' [Daniel 12.2 NIV]

The Apostle Paul was also convinced of the resurrection. We read in his first letter to the Thessalonians:

‘For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.’ [1 Thessalonians 4.16 NIV]

Jesus then, being the resurrection and the life, we surely need to associate ourselves with him to be part of the resurrection and life. How do we do that? We need to open our Bibles to search out the true Gospel message and we need to get to know Jesus and to obey his commandments:

‘As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.’ [John 15.9,10 NIV]

After the example of Jesus we must get to know what God really wants from us in service to Him. Jesus, in his three and a half years ministry, obeyed his heavenly Father. To have Jesus live or abide in us we must try to copy his Godly characteristics. We need to become adopted children of God by faith and through baptism. Without it we cannot share in the resurrection and life evermore. The teaching of Jesus is unmistakable:

‘Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.’ [John 12.26 NIV]

‘...I tell you the truth, no-one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.’ [John 3.5]

What greater honour could there be than life evermore? Surely that is what we all long for? Not life as it is now, with pain and sorrow but life in God’s promised kingdom upon this earth. Jesus is life. He is our hope, our redeemer. Even if we die we will live again. Those who are still alive at Christ’s return who believe in Him are baptised and found worthy, will never die. What a wonderful hope. What more can we wish for? Far better than any

lottery prize. Truly something money cannot buy - something freely available if only we act upon it now.

As Martha gazed upon Jesus, in answer to His question *'Do you believe this?'* [John 11.26 NIV] her reply was *'Yes Lord,'* and she continued *'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.'* [John 11.27 NIV]

The resurrection of Lazarus was a miraculous sign pointing forward to Jesus' own resurrection and that greater day of resurrection yet to come. The record in John continues: *'So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."'* When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, *'Lazarus, come out!'* The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, *'Take off the grave clothes and let him go.'* [John 11.41-44 NIV]

Before their eyes the miracle took place. Lazarus came out of the tomb. They saw the glory of God. At Bethany Jesus cried with a loud voice, *'Lazarus, come out!'* Jesus also promised that those who were in the graves would hear his voice and be raised at his return to the earth.

'Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.' [John 5.28,29 NIV]

We can contrast this miracle with the events surrounding Christ's own resurrection. In Matthew's gospel record we are told it was an angel who removed the stone. Jesus' grave clothes were lying in the tomb, as well as the burial cloth that had been around him, folded up by itself. It was not thrown in a corner or trampled under foot as it would have been if the false accusations of the chief priests and Pharisees, that grave robbers had been and taken him away, were to be believed. *'Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.'* [John 20.6,7 NIV] Jesus was raised from the dead, free from grave clothes. Death had no more power over him.

The teaching of the New Testament is that forgiveness of sins through Christ is the means of raising the believer to a new life. At Christ's return many will be raised from the dead. The gift of everlasting life will be given to those who have believed in Jesus, have been baptised and truly followed him as his disciples.

The example and teaching of Jesus needs to be a force in our lives today. For those who are his disciples he is *'the resurrection and the life.'*

Michael Baker
Sussex, England

Editorial

THE WILDER KAISER is a mountain situated in the western Austrian province of the Tyrol. Lying between Germany on the north and Italy on the south it is part of the Alps. The building at the base of the mountain, shown on our cover picture is about 5,060 ft (1611 metres) above sea level.

Who can fail to be moved by the awe-inspiring majesty and the apparent permanence of these vast mountain ranges found in so many countries around the world? Some are green and lush, whilst others are barren and others snow capped - a starting point for rivers and glaciers.

The first article in this issue is another in the series on Bible Symbols. It shows that mountains and hills are used by the Scriptures to symbolise nations and rulers both in the past and the future, through the outworking of prophecy. When Jesus encouraged his followers to search the Scriptures, he knew that only by doing so would the lessons be appreciated and the deeper truths contained in them be revealed.

We believe that the day will soon be here when the temple of the Lord will be re-established in Mount Zion (Jerusalem) as a place of worship for all people. This will fulfil the prophecy of Micah who wrote:

'In the last days, the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it.' [Micah 4.1 NIV]

Basic Bible Teaching

God the Creator

DURING A MIDLANDS radio programme broadcast in the UK, the question was asked 'Is there a God?' From the ideas that were expressed by contributors to the programme, it became clear that many of the people doubted the existence of such a divine being. What evidence is there then for the existence of God?

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

For the moment we will place the Bible on one side and try to apply common sense. Men and women are free to believe what they like. If they believe a lie, it will have no lasting benefit and it will be worthless, whereas, if we believe what is true, this will bring a sense of satisfaction because it is realistic. Our objective is to consider the evidence that there is a God who is all powerful, that He has created all things that we see around us and is in complete control of the universe.

The astronomers tell us of their discoveries and it is agreed by all that space is apparently boundless. The more powerful the telescope, the universe simply expands beyond our view. Although many scientists refuse to accept God as the Creator, there have always been some who believe in God. One such was the well-known scientist Sir Isaac Newton, who did believe and the account of how he persuaded his friend to accept this also, is an example of applying simple logic and common sense.

‘WHO MADE IT?’

Sir Isaac Newton had a friend who, like himself, was a great scientist but he did not believe in God. By contrast, Newton was a devout believer. They often discussed their views concerning God, as their mutual interest in science drew them together. Newton had a skilful mechanic make him a miniature replica of our solar system. In the centre was a large gilded sphere representing the sun and revolving in their proper order around this were smaller spheres fixed on the ends of arms of varying lengths, representing Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto. These balls were so geared together by cogs and belts as to move in perfect harmony when turned by a crank.

One day as Newton sat reading in his study with his mechanism on a large table near him, his friend arrived. As a scientist he recognised at a glance what was before him. Stepping up to it, he slowly turned the crank and with undisguised admiration, watched the heavenly bodies all move at their relative speed in their orbits. Standing back a short way from it he exclaimed: *‘My, what an exquisite thing this is. Who made it?’* Without looking up from his book, Newton answered *‘Nobody.’* Quickly turning to Newton, his friend said: *‘Evidently you did not understand my question. I asked, who made this?’*

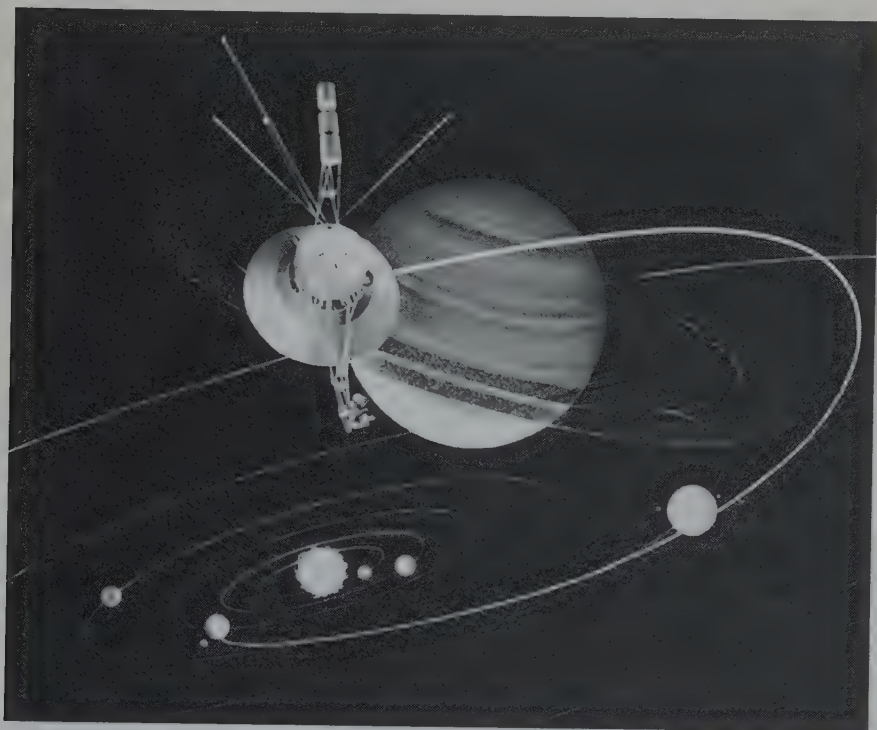
Looking up, Newton solemnly assured him that nobody made it but that the aggregation of matter so much admired had just happened to assume the form it was in. But the astonished man replied with some heat, *‘You must think that I am a fool. Of course somebody made it and he is a genius and I’d like to know who he is.’* Laying aside his book, Newton arose and placing his hand on his friend’s shoulder, said: *‘This thing is but a puny imitation of a much grander system whose laws you know and I am not able to convince you that this mere toy is without a designer and maker. Yet you profess to believe that the great original from which the design has come into being is without either a designer or maker: now tell me by what sort of reasoning do you reach such an incongruous conclusion?’*

His friend was at once convinced and became a firm believer in the existence of God.

THE EVIDENCE OF DESIGN IN CREATION

In the solar system we see order and arrangement, so much so that the

scientists can tell us almost to a second what will happen with the eclipses of the sun the moon and other heavenly bodies. The evidence is clearly in favour of design and therefore a designer and creator.



Our Solar System with the Mariner space station in the foreground

A spinning top will remain upright until its speed runs down and then it will fall. Now the earth has been spinning in space at an amazing rate of 1031.5 miles per hour at the Equator for thousands of years and man is powerless to alter or amend it. By whose power does this earth keep spinning? An object cannot of itself begin to move. Therefore as the earth continues to rotate a power must be controlling it. That power we believe is God. The precise timetable for one revolution is 23 hours 56 minutes and 4 seconds. How remarkable that the earth spins with such precision allowing scientists to measure and record these facts.

To say that the earth just assumed its present size and decided to revolve just by blind chance is not even reasonable or sensible. Blind chance is what it says – blind! It doesn't know where it is going. Chance is that which happens without design or preparation according to the dictionary.

But this is not all. Consider the fact that the earth travels round the sun, not in a circle but in a special orbit at the amazing speed of approximately 66,600 miles per hour which is 18.5 miles per second. Now the weight of the earth is in the region of 5,887,613,230,000,000,000,000 tons! Its circuit around the sun is some 600 billion miles which it completes in 365 days 5 hours 48 minutes and 46 seconds while it is tilted on its axis at 23.45 degrees. What amazing facts!

The Bible tells us that God's power is immeasurable, so we can appreciate how God created and controls not only the earth but also the entire solar system and the universe beyond. Surely it is unreasonable to say that it could all happen by blind chance. However, to believe that there is an all wise and almighty God who created the heavens and the earth by His great power is sensible and reasonable.

We see order and arrangement with the solar system that strongly suggests that there must have been a Divine mind behind the design and the creation of all that we see. It works so precisely that it is just beyond man's capacity to challenge it. The very first verse of the Holy Bible simply states the fact that '*In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.*' [Genesis 1.1] We don't know when this happened but '*In the beginning*' allows for this to have been a very long time ago.

THE HONEY BEE

Now just as the solar system is vast, let us by contrast think about a very small creature, nature's wonder worker the bee. In common with all other living things, the bee provides evidence for design and therefore a designer.

There are three kinds of bees in the hive. There is the worker bee that is an immature female and there are the drones which are the males. Thirdly, there is the queen bee of which there can be only one in each hive.

An **unmated** queen lays eggs which hatch out into drones so that she can be mated. Who arranged this in the first place – did it happen by chance? Once the queen has been mated, she can lay eggs (the size of a pin's point). If all the eggs she lays in her lifetime were placed in a straight line they would stretch for $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles - she can lay over 1,500 eggs per day, if necessary. When she lays an egg in a small cell, it develops into a worker bee that has a mouth and legs equipped to collect pollen and nectar and it has moderate size wings and a sting that can only be used once.



Honey bees within the hive

The same queen lays eggs in medium size cells and these develop into drones that have no sting nor mouth and legs to collect pollen and nectar.

However they have large wings because they have to chase and catch the queen in flight for mating and they are turned out of the hive in the autumn. The large queen cells are used by the workers, so that if the queen is lost or dies, they can take a grub or an egg from either cell and place it in a queen cell and feed it with royal jelly to produce a queen.

A queen has small wings because she spends most of her time in the hive but she has a retractable sting that can be used to defend herself against another queen trying to take over. She is looked after by the nurse bees, both cleaning and feeding her and has no facility to collect nectar or pollen. Her aroma is known by all the bees to enable them to find her if she leaves the hive.

Thus, from the same queen, the eggs will produce a queen in 15 days, a worker in 21 days and a drone bee in 25 days. The queen is vital for the hive so when a queen is lost, as time is essential, it only takes 15 days to produce another queen. It is clear that each kind of bee has been designed to do its kind of work, not forgetting the pollination of crops, flowers and fruit. Is it possible for blind chance to develop such unique creatures as the honey-bee?

If we study the head of a worker bee, it is astounding how such a small creature is equipped with such fantastic eyes. The worker bee has three single eyes on the crown of his head and two compound eyes on either side of his head. These compound eyes contain 12,000 hexagonal facets, so that the bee can see in every direction outside the hive and also inside the hive where it is dark. Surely it points to the fact that the hand that designed and created them is Divine. There can be no other explanation for these marvels of nature, of which there are tens of thousands, than that they have been designed and created by a Divine being whose power and might is just beyond our comprehension.

Applying the same common sense and logic that convinced Sir Isaac Newton's unbelieving friend, any reasonable mind will conclude that there must be an all-wise Creator. It might be asked, 'Why is it that God hasn't told us about Himself?' The fact is that God has given to us the Bible which explains who He is, what He has done and what He is about to do in the future with the earth and mankind. Sadly, most people just choose to ignore God's Word.

GOD THE CREATOR

The Bible was written at God's command as we read in Paul's second

letter to Timothy:

'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.'

[2 Timothy 3,16,17]

We must turn to the Bible to see what God tells us about Himself and His purpose in Creation. The Apostle Paul told the Athenians, as he stood on Mars Hill: *'God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath and all things.'* [Acts 17.24,25]

The Apostle Paul believed that God created all things and that we are dependent on God for our very existence. This is confirmed in the Old Testament also where God says through the words of the prophet Isaiah: *'I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD and there is **none else**.'* [Isaiah 45.12,18]

The Bible tells us that there is one God and there is **none else** like him. This is emphasised many times as Moses told the nation of Israel: *'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is **one** LORD.'* [Deuteronomy 6.4] The unity of God is also confirmed in the New Testament where the Apostle Paul states that: *'To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things.'* [1 Corinthians 8.6] Yes, the same message is taught in both the Old and the New Testaments.

God **does** exist. The marvels of the world in which we live testify to this fact. It is the Bible alone, God's Holy Word, which tells us WHY. The Bible tells us that God has a purpose with the earth and with His creation as He told Moses, *'as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.'* [Numbers 14.21]

As we reflect upon the intricacy of the creatures and the balance of nature, it becomes obvious to the thoughtful reader that a Divine power must

be the guiding hand that is responsible for these things. The beauty of the picture below is a living proof that nothing happens by chance.



A busy worker bee collecting pollen and fertilising plants to complete the cycle of growth, by shedding pollen dust on other flowers

There is a wonderful future in store for those who come to know and trust the God of the Bible. The prayer of Jesus reminds us of this:

‘...This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.’

[John 17.3]

Stanley Hughes
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Mad Cows - Mad Men - Wise God

YOU MAY HAVE seen the news, that in the United Kingdom we are still in the grip of 'Foot and Mouth disease' which has spread like wildfire through our farmland. This resulted in the slaughter of over 3,500,000 cattle and sheep and the postponement of local and national elections until last June.

Unfortunately in the UK and in some parts of Europe, we still have cattle affected by 'Mad Cow disease' or 'Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy' (BSE) to give it its scientific name. It has now been admitted that this disease has links with a similar condition in humans called 'Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease', which is known to have killed 86 people, mostly in Britain. No one knows how many more people may be affected.

Recently the 'Wall Street Journal' expressed the view that Israel had been far-sighted in banning all cattle imports and associated by-products from Europe since 1988. This ban emphasises the fact that Israel as a nation still largely follows the dietary laws and prohibition of the use of certain animals as food,



An unusual scene in Cumbria England, the fields and hills without animals grazing

Which was laid down in the statutes given to Moses by God. (See Leviticus chapter 11 and Deuteronomy chapter 14)

The cause of the disease in cattle has been traced to the fact that some 'clever' scientist (or should we say mad scientist?) thought it would be a good idea to feed cattle with the ground up remains of other animals mixed with their natural food in pellet form.

If we study the laws given by God to Moses, we will find that the Israelites were forbidden to eat certain meat; ie the flesh of animals that had died a natural death, animals that had been killed by other animals and the flesh of scavengers. So does this mean that the Bible's viewpoint is right after all? Do we see here part of God's wisdom in those laws given to His people so long ago? A study of the Law of Moses, show that many of the principles contained therein are confirmed by the teaching of Christ and are enlarged upon in the commandments which he has given to his followers. Although the disciples of Christ are not required to keep the Law of Moses, it is our view that we ignore the principles contained in the Scriptures at our peril.

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